The Cheerful Letter

EVERY PLACE A CHURCH; EVERY DAY THE LORD'S DAY; ALL EVENTS BLESSINGS; ALL JOY THANKSGIVING; AND ALL NATURE AND LIFE FULL OF GOD.—*James Freeman Clarke.*

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THE CHEERFUL LETTER.

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CONSOLATION.

"They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace. . . . Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?"

Yes, trouble springs not from the ground, yet must it ever be.
Man knows that he is born to care, so seeks his remedy;
And he hath found out store of charms and spells to give it rest,
Yet grief turns from human comforters, the Highest is the best!

One saith: "Be comforted, for grief is idle and is vain.
It never hath brought the smile to Joy's dead face again.
It only fixes there the look it wore when Hope took leave."
"Yes, grief *is* vain, I know it well; and therefore do I grieve."

One saith, "Be comforted; for thus how many say with dawn,
'Would God that it were eve!' at eve, 'Would God that it were morn!'"
But then, more noble in its woe, spake out the grieving heart,
"Nay! rather would I all were blest, and bear alone my smart."

"And yet," saith one, "be comforted; for grieving is a sin.
Thy tears may stain heaven's goodly floors, yet there be trodden in.
This is a grief that Heaven hath sent, a grief that thou must bear."
And Patience smiled so cold, so cold, I took her for Despair!

Yet these were simple reasoners. I said: I will arise.
I will seek out counsel from the sage and wisdom from the wise.
They shall show me of their merchandise who trade for hidden things,
Who go down to the heart's great deep, to track its secret springs.

Then, with calm brow, one answered me, in measured tones and brief,
That we are stronger for our pain, and nobler for our grief;
And, when I looked on him, I saw he spoke what he believed;
And I talked no more of grief to him who ne'er himself had grieved.

Or he had known that spoke of will, how vain its stern control
When deep is calling unto deep within the wave-tost soul;
Yea, happy are they that endure! yet never was the tide
Of nature's agony stemmed back by high, o'ermastering pride.

But, then, with kindlier mien, one said: "Go forth unto the fields;
For there, and in the woods, are balms that Nature freely yields.
Let Nature take thee to her heart! She hath a bounteous breast,
That yearns o'er all her sorrowing sons; and she will give thee rest."

But Nature on the spirit-sick, as on the spirit free,
Smiled, like a fair, unloving face, too bright for sympathy.
Sweet, ever sweet, are whispering leaves, are waters in their flow;

But never from them breathed a tone to comfort human woe!

Small solace for the deer that hath the arrow in his side,
And only seeks the woods to die, that o'er his dappled hide
Spread purple blooms of bedded heath, and ferny branchings tall.
A deadly hurt must have strong cure, or it hath none at all.

And the old warfare from within, that had gone on so long,
The wasting of the inner strife, the sting of outward wrong,
Went with me o'er the breezy hill, went with me up the glade.
I found *not* God among the trees, and yet I was afraid!

I mused; and fire that smouldered long, within my breast brake free.
I said: "O God, thy works are good, and yet they are not thee.
Still greater to the sense is that which breathes through every part,
Still sweeter to the heart than all is he who made the heart!

"I will seek thee, not thine, O Lord! for (now I mind me) still
Thou sendest us for soothing, not to fountain nor to hill.
Yet is there comfort in the fields if we walk in them with thee,
Who saidest: 'Come, ye burdened ones, ye weary, unto me.'"

Yet is there comfort, not in pride that spends its strength in vain,
But in casting all our care on thee,—on thee who wilt sustain;
Not in dull Patience, saying, "This I bear, for it must be,"
But in knowing that, howe'er Grief comes, it comes to us from thee!

Thou, Lord, who teachest how to pray, oh, teach us *how* to grieve!
For thou hast learned the task we find so hard, yet may not leave;
For thou hast grown acquaint with grief,—thou knowest what we feel;
Thou smitest and thou bindest up: we look to thee to heal!

Dora Greenwell.

THE MINISTRY OF PAIN.

The finest efforts human nature is capable of are due to pain. Do you see that block of marble which has been quarried from the mountain side? That shapeless mass contains a priceless treasure which lies dormant till, with patient skill, the hand of the sculptor proceeds to call it forth. Mark his work. The countenance at his command begins to display its varied charms,—the noble brow sublime in thought, the lips which, like some living being, seem to move and smile. At length, complete and perfect, this masterpiece of sculpture has power to awaken a responsive chord in your heart.

Well, then, my brethren, like the chisel of the sculptor, so is pain, in the Almighty hand of God, the means by which he wills to form and fashion his own elect,—to remove their original defects, and call into being courage, self-devotion, and all the finer qualities of their nature. There has never been one great person in this world who has not come through sorrow first; for neither genius, glory, nor even virtue, will suffice in themselves to make a great character.

And this is a mystery easily explained. Saint Augustine says: "Human nature is small, because it is restricted within certain limits. The smaller a man's nature is, the more it loves these limits. In order to become great, these limits must be overleapt, and this requires an effort." A modern writer, commenting on this passage, says: "These limits are like the circle of fire round an insect. The insect feels the heat, approaches the flame, shrinks back, and dies." The weak and cowardly souls act like this; but the noble disposition tries to cross this circle of fire. If you analyze the elements of a great and noble character, you will find out that they have all been fused together in the furnace of sorrow."

Those who have never suffered know only the surface of life. As one must strike flint to call forth sparks of fire, so must we strike the heart to make it capable of great and noble deeds. Read history, and you will see that great heroes and great men have ever been the privileged children of sorrow, and that, when the laurel comes to wreathe the furrowed brow of the poet, it is ever a tardy crown. Look at Dante! Has the world produced a greater poet? Is there one who can be compared to him? Why is Dante so great? Because of the depth and grandeur of his poetic conception. But

would Dante have known this depth and grandeur if he had not suffered?

The same can be said of Tasso, Milton, Homer. Out of sorrow and suffering such poets are born; and the hero on the battle-field, the soldier who falls in his country's cause, are made of the same stern stuff. Austerity and mortification moulded the saints of old. They met misfortune with a smile, and scorned the fear of death even when the fire was at the stake, and the flames rose around their heads, because they knew that out of their very ashes God would call them to an immortality of happiness.—*Padre A. da Montefeltro.*

THE STILL HOUR.

LIFE'S MYSTERY.

Life's mystery—deep, restless as the ocean—
Hath surged and wailed for ages to and fro;
Earth's generations watch its ceaseless motion
As in and out its hollow moanings flow;
Shivering and yearning by that unknown sea,
Let my soul calm itself, O Christ, in thee!

Life's sorrows, with inexorable power,
Sweep desolation o'er this mortal plain;
And human loves and hopes fly as the chaff
Borne by the whirlwind from the ripened grain:
Ah, when before that blast my hopes all flee,
Let my soul calm itself, O Christ, in thee!

Between the mysteries of death and life
Thou standest, loving, guiding,—not explaining;
We ask, and thou art silent,—yet we gaze,
And our charmed hearts forget their drear complaining!
No crushing fate, no stony destiny!
Thou Lamb that hast been slain, we rest in thee.

The many waves of thought, the mighty tides,
The ground-swell that rolls up from other lands,
From far-off worlds, from dim eternal shores
Whose echo dashes on life's wave-worn strands,
This vague, dark tumult of the inner sea
Grows calm, grows bright, O risen Lord, in thee!

Thy pierced hand guides the mysterious wheels;
Thy thorn-crowned brow now wears the crown of power;
And, when the dark enigma presses sore,
Thy patient voice says, "Watch with me one hour!"
As sinks the moaning river in the sea
In silver peace, so sinks my soul in thee!

Harriet Beecher Stowe.

We are so liable to be unreal in our devotions, to have no overshadowing consciousness of the awful Being, awful in his goodness even more than in his power, awful in his nearness and in his mysterious connection with us, to whom we are about to speak, that we come not to know that it is an act of the highest irreverence to dare to speak to God without first carefully drawing nigh to him, and seeking by collectedness of being to be penetrated through and through by a sense of what he is. "Exalt him as much as ye can, for even yet will he far exceed; and, when ye exalt him, put forth all your strength, and be not weary. For ye can never go far enough."—*Thom.*

A revival impends,—a new movement in behalf of the perfect life. So prevailing is the revelation and perception of the importance of morality that for this cause we shall have not only preaching and prayer, but offerings, sacrifices, crusades, and pilgrimages. This generation shall not pass till some of these things be fulfilled. The time is near, there has never been such a day of promise,—only the Church as it now is can hinder it,—when new orders will be formed, brotherhoods of men, bands of women, using not the language nor dressed in the livery of the past, but responding to the call of to-day,

"Who see life steadily, and see it whole,"

first seeking to control and purify and make their own lives rational, then going forth to their fellow-men, to the ignorant and helpless, and those ready to perish, each with such cheer and healing as he has.—*J. C. Learned.*

No fever can attack a perfectly sound body: no fever of unrest can disturb a soul which has breathed the air or learned the ways of Christ. Men sigh for the wings of a dove that they may fly away and be at rest. But flying away will not help us. "The kingdom of God is within you." We aspire to the top to look for rest. It lies at the bottom. Water rests only when it gets to the lowest place. So do men. Hence be lowly. The man who has no opinion of himself at all can never be hurt if others do not acknowledge him. Hence be meek. He who is without expectation cannot fret

if nothing comes to him. It is self-evident that these things are so. The lowly man and the meek man are really above all other men, above all other things. They dominate the world because they do not care for it. The miser does not possess gold: gold possesses him. But the meek possess it. "The meek," said Christ, "inherit the earth." They do not buy it, they do not conquer it; but they inherit it.—*Drummond.*

THE BOOK AND MAGAZINE CLUB.

[*Send all offers and requests for this department to Mrs. W. B. Nichols, 2 Kensington Park, Roxbury, Mass.*]

OFFERS.

Will any mother who would like to have "Gentle Measures in Training the Young," by Jacob Abbott, or any one who would like "Black Beauty," address Miss Langmaid, 373 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass.?

The following books are offered by the Cambridge Branch. Address, Miss Mary A. Vinal, secretary, 20 Lowell Street, Cambridge.

Howitt's "Stories of English and European Life"; "The Days of Mohammed"; "Victor Serenus"; "The Pedagogues"; "Silence of Dean Maitland"; "March Hares"; "Out of the Question"; "At the Sign of the Savage"; "The Sorrow of a Secret"; "My Sister's Keeper"; "An International Episode"; "To Have and to Hold"; "A Christmas Masque,—Our Darlings"; "Midshipman Easy"; "Guy Mannering"; "Kenilworth"; "In His Steps"; the *Southern Workman*, 1901; *Popular Science Monthly*, 1899–1900; "Five Little Peppers"; "Fairies of Other Stories"; "The Red Story Book."

The Lowell Branch offer the following books. Address Miss A. F. Anderson, 31 Anne Street, Lowell, Mass.:—

"Other Worlds than Ours," "The Expanse of Heaven," "Our Place among the Infinities," Proctor; "Astronomy Primer," Lockyer; "The Great Ice Age," Geikie; "Methods of Study in Natural History," Agassiz; "Nature of Light," Lommel; "Correlation and Conservation of Forces," Helmholtz, Faraday, Liebiger; "Five Senses of Man," Bernstein; "Descent and Darwinism," Schmidt; "Analytical Geometry and Calculus," Loomis; "Outlines of History," "Historical Atlas," Labberton; "Questions on Lyman's Chart of Universal History"; "History of English Literature and Biographical Sketches"; "Advanced Course of Composition and Rhetoric," Quackenbos; "Natural Book-keeping," Bryant and Stratton; "A Journal of Summertime in the Country," Willmot; "Complete Music Reader," "Part Song Chorus Book," Whitney; "Cecilian Service of Study and Song Book."

The Newton Branch offers the following books. Address Miss Caroline T. Coppins, 567 Centre Street, Newton, Mass.

"Caste," Sidney A. Story; "Mabel Vaughan"; "Haunted Hearts"; "Striving and Gaining," "Fireside Story Book," Maria Edgeworth; "Tales of Domestic Life," T. S. Arthur; "The Mayflower," H. B. Stowe; "Elements of Physiology and Hygiene"; "Memoir of Mrs. J. H. Scott," by Mrs. Sawyer; "General History of Freemasonry," R. Moery; "Outlines of Physical Geography"; Parker's "Exercises in English Composition"; Magill's "French Grammar"; children's book: "Story of an Apple," "Love Each Other," Mrs. Livingston.

(Miss) Cora A. Tilden, Box 45, Milton, Mass., offers the following books:—

"Quo Vadis"; "A Knight Errant," "A Hardy Norseman," Edna Lyall; "New Arabian Nights," R. L. Stevenson; "The Firm of Girdlestone," A. Conan Doyle; "An Egyptian Princess," George Ebers; Park's *Floral Magazine;* the *Mayflower* (flower magazine).

The following books are offered by the Second Church Branch, Salem. Address Miss Decker, 4 Mt. Vernon Street, Salem, Mass. First requests must contain references.

"Lorna Doone," Blackmore; "Cape Cod Folks," S. P. McLean; "Robert Elsmere," Mrs. H. Ward; "The Hill of Pains," Gilbert Parker; "A Gentleman of Leisure," Edgar Fawcett; "The Fortunes of a Day," Grace E. Channing; "In Old Quinnebasset," Sophie May; "In Darkest England," Booth; "Excelsior," Longfellow; "Miriam," Whittier; "The Pitts Street Chapel Lectures"; "Missionary Heroes and Martyrs," L. E. Smith; "Letters and Social Aims," R. W. Emerson; "Music," vocal and instrumental.

REQUESTS.

[Read direction at beginning of Book Club before writing.]

Those who send offers and requests for the Book Club will do us a kindness by noting the following suggestions: 1. Please write very clearly. 2. Do not use a pencil. 3. Do not use contractions, especially names of States (as Cal. and Col. for California, Colorado). 4. Write on one side only of the paper. 5. Do not forget to give your full address. (The State is now and then omitted.) 6. Do not send matter for the Book Club to Miss Clarke, but to Mrs. Nichols, the Book Club secretary.

Those who write to us for the first time must send the name and address of a minister as a reference. Without that the request will not be printed.

Mrs. H. Krieger, Salida, Chaffee County, Colorado, would be glad of German papers and illustrated papers for her husband, who is an invalid.

Mrs. Ada V. Wann has moved from Glenzaida, Alabama, to Forreston, Ellis County, Texas. She asks for periodicals, also books for her boys.

We live in a remote place and enjoy reading matter, good standard and substantial books, also good periodicals. Any of Wilkie Collins, Charles Reade, Thackeray, Dickens, Hugo, etc. We shall be grateful for anything you send. Ilse M. Deyoe, Avon Park, De Soto County, Florida.

I would be glad to receive Robert Browning and Mrs. Browning's poems, also "Real Folks" by Mrs. A. D. T. Whitney. Miss Jennie E. Ford, Monroe Centre, Maine.

I thank the kind friends who have sent me books, and would be glad to receive any or all of the following: Double entry book-keeping; astronomy, and chemistry. W. A. Gattis Foster, Summerfield, North Carolina.

Mrs. E. W. Pryor, Chestnut, Amherst County, Virginia, asks for Fiske's "Civil Government" or any of the following books: Myers's "General History," Milton's "Paradise Lost," Books I. and II., De Quincey's "Flight of a Tartar Tribe," "History of English Literature to the Close of the Reign of Queen Anne."

Will some one please send me any of E. P. Roe's books? I so much desire the book, "He fell in Love with his Wife," also "Tempest and Sunshine" and some good story papers. Also, a few pieces of lively music. I am a dear lover of flowers. With love and best wishes for one and all of the Cheerful Letter band, lovingly, Mrs. Martha W. Guy, Germantown, Bracken County, Kentucky. P.O. Box 5.

Many thanks to the kind friends that have sent us books and papers. I am a shut-in now, having been sick about three months. Would some one please send me some magazines and some books on history. I have been trying to get some books on history, but failed. I would like very much to get some good little books to interest my two little girls, one aged five and the other two years. May God bless you in your noble work! Mrs. Anna P. Tucker, Buena Vista, Virginia.

Mrs. Lillie Davis, Shiloh, New Jersey, asks for reading for herself and for her boy, who is eleven years old.

Mrs. Rosa Benson, Mingus, Texas, asks for any numbers of the *Review of Reviews* for 1901, and copies of the *Ladies' Home Journal* 1899, except the numbers from May to October inclusive.

I wish to thank the kind Cheerful Letter friends for past tokens of remembrances, and to ask them to send me some more reading this winter. We live in a country place on a farm; and, as I have to stay alone all day, I find it lonely, indeed, at times. I would like the "Normal Instructor" and "Self-culture," and any good current literature. I shall be very thankful for any reading sent me to help me pass these lonely, stormy days, when I have no one to speak to and my only companions are books. Yours thankfully, Mrs. Edward A. Clark, Levant, Maine, formerly of 8 Summer Street, Brewer, Maine.

(It is best to give the names of the authors of books that you desire. There is more than one book called "Self-culture.")

I have received but little reading for some time. I especially desire "Thelma," but shall be glad of any good novels. Mrs. Hattie D. Wood, Mannsville, Indian Territory.

Mrs. James Newman, Verano, Patrick County, Virginia, asks for reading.

Edward R. Bailey, Tola, Charlotte County, Virginia, asks for a Fourth Reader and a Third Reader for his brother. The readers are called "Stepping-stones to Literature."

Miss Mary L. Bailey, Tola, Virginia, asks for a dictionary and "Samantha's Trip Round the World," or "Samantha at Saratoga."

Rev. D. S. Hubbel, Red House P.O., Charlotte County, Virginia, would like to receive the *Christian Herald*, also some magazines.

Mrs. Ida Latson, Olympia, Wash., asks for reading. She would like to receive histories, and the book entitled "How they kept the Faith."

The following books are asked for by Mrs. Adelia Wofford, Pine Grove, Texas: "Josephus," "Marie Antoinette and Son." Also any by Augusta T. Evans, Mary J. Holmes, Marie Corelli, Edna Lyall, or reading for a girl twelve years old.

Mrs. Ada Hall, Vera, Indian Territory, asks for "The Bonnie Brier Bush" or other reading.

Mrs. Hortense Burks, Sandidges, Amherst County, Virginia, is much in need of the following books to help her in her teaching, as her pupils cannot obtain books: Two "Mawry's Elementary Geographies"; one "Merrill's Speller"; a First, Second and Third Reader in "Stepping Stones to Literature" series; Reed & Kellogg's "Higher Lessons in English."

Mrs. Celestia E. Guernsey, Great Bend, Pennsylvania, asks for "Ten Great Religions" by Rev. J. F. Clarke, D.D.

Will any boy, fourteen or fifteen years old, who would like to correspond with a boy of the same age, send his name to the Secretary, Miss Laugmaid.

Mrs. A. F. McQueen, Alfordsville, North Carolina, asks for the *Ladies' Home Journal*, the *Youth's Companion*, *Harper's*, *Household Journal* (does this mean the *Household*?), or any other reading matter.

THE MOTHERS' COUNCIL.

[Contributions for this department may be sent to Mrs. J. S. Howe, 26 Chestnut Street, Brookline, Mass.]

TRAINING CHILDREN TO BE HELPFUL.

I believe so thoroughly in developing the responsibility of childhood that my theory has become a practice in my own family.

The most successful pastor in California said in an address three years ago that "a church should be managed as a well-ordered family is, each child to take an active part in its affairs, and to feel the success and honor of the whole was upon his shoulders." This remark touched a train of thought long in my own mind, and made me watch and think; and I found in the course of my observations that the families where the children were made equal—according to their powers—with the parents in contributing to the well-being of the home life were the exception not the rule. I had tried in a desultory way to train my boys for usefulness at home, but from this time I began systematically to teach my little ones to feel that they were as important factors in the happiness of home as were father and mother.

As I have never found the ideal nurse, I have cared for the children alone; and there are many steps to be taken for a number of little children together, the eldest not six years old when wee Number Five was given a rapturous welcome. The two eldest boys were taught it was a privilege to help mother; for did she not sew and work for them all the time? And so it was necessary to give them turns in doing little errands, such as taking a note to the kitchen, putting a soiled article of clothing in the hamper, carrying the mail upstairs, or running for father's newspaper. Little by little the duties were increased, and this meant training and patience for both mother and children; but it was time well spent, she knew, and the result has more than repaid her. Two tiny boys began to pick up toys and to clear up the nursery every night, and the baby fingers of little sister tried to help.

It often was a lengthy piece of work; but with a little firmness and patience it was accomplished, and mother was saved a half-hour which could be given to little brother,

and thus make time to read to the flock. One day manly Number One, then about four years old, was allowed to go on an errand two blocks from home; and from that time he often ran on errands at a greater distance. As time went on, Number Two went with him, hand in hand. Two mites bobbed and danced down the street to order dinner or to purchase a spool of thread, bringing home the right change; for it was little trouble to teach them about dimes and nickels, and a leather bag slung over the shoulder kept money and small parcels safely. Now there are four children anxious to assist mother, and she often wonders how she could get through her duties without their *willing* feet. For the beauty of it is they love to help; and seldom is there a grumble, but often the question, "What else can I do, mother?"

Number One, now six and a half, has for a year dressed quickly, then pulled off the covers of his own and his brother's beds, and opened the windows. Usually, Number Two is then dressed, and they go down together to put the silver around the breakfast table, sometimes help set it; and they do it as nicely as kindergarten work, each article being placed correctly. Then upstairs, and two little beds are made neatly, with usual kindergarten exactness, sheets and cases changed when necessary, and clothes hung in closet. Sister flies for the newspaper, and five happy faces greet the oatmeal with delight. When we do not have school in the nursery, hats and coats are donned, the bag slung over the shoulder of each boy in turn, and with sister's hands in theirs they trot off on errands, sometimes delivering four or five notes a number of blocks away from home, or going to a barber's to have hair cut, or perhaps to do some shopping. They are known in the stores usually patronized, and are honorably treated. During the day the children vie with each other in caring for little Number Five, now seven months old, and she is rocked in cradle or driven in house-wagon, or the bottle is fetched by Number Four, whose business it is to bring it; and rarely do any of the flock feel it anything but a pleasure to leave their play to help mother. When clean clothes are sorted, sister trots back and forth, saving many steps; and a little care has taught her to put them away carefully.

At 5 P.M. Number One attends to little brother's crib, which is in disorder from the nap, and, when that is done, undresses sister, while mother attends to baby and Number Four. Number Two meanwhile is clearing up the nursery; and, when everything is in place, the two older babies eat their supper. Baby is quiet; and the boys and mother have time for reading or for a frolic with father, if he is at home. On school-days the boys arrange the nursery for a school-room, and, when the studies are over, put everything away, and transform the room into a nursery once more.

From my experience, I think that children enjoy themselves much better when their lives are not all play: and that more mischief develops when there are no duties than with them. Self-reliance is acquired, unselfishness unconsciously developed, and an interest in home affairs engendered, which in this age of boarding-houses is most important for founding homes of their own. It makes them considerate of mother, and the boys will naturally be considerate of other women; and it helps the whole family to feel there is a common cause to work for and a precious home to be made blissful. It has not touched the natural light-heartedness of childhood, for a jollier little group never made a house ring with their mirth; and it has not made prigs of them, as they do not imagine they are doing more than all children, and they do not hear their achievements discussed, but they do know father and mother have burdens which they can help bear. For each service cheerfully performed a prompt "thank you" is given, and this is a mutual thing.

The secret of the helpfulness of these little children is only in having them do the *little* things while they are small. Large duties come soon enough, and they are no more expected to do them than they are expected to read Dickens. It is best to begin with the A, B, C, of house affairs; for the little ones are just as capable of learning practical as they are of learning useless things, and when they see the utility of their work, they are all the more proud of it. It is all a question of parental patience, for it certainly takes less time in the beginning for mother to do it all herself; but later she is rewarded by useful, unselfish children. If she is a careful housekeeper, she must shut

her eyes to wrinkles in the counterpane, stray toys here and there, or imperfect errands, recollecting that time will help all these; and later she will realize how precious these crude beginnings were.

The foundation for helpful men and women is laid with useful children, who will, as they mature, look out for opportunities to do good, and, as their horizon widens with years, make homes and have an influence for good that will be felt throughout the community.

Mary Hedley Scudder.

I have thought it might be helpful to some mothers if I should add two passages from Mrs. Barbauld's "Hymns in Prose" which I have often read to children and found that they liked. Along with them I have ventured to put two very simple prayers, such as any mother might teach her children to say.—*Hannah Herford.*

When the darkness is passed away and the beams of the morning sun strike through your eyelids, begin the day with praising God, who hath taken care of you through the night. Flowers, when you open again, spread your leaves, and smell sweet to His praise. Birds, when you awake, warble your thanks amongst the green boughs. Sing to Him before you sing to your mates. Let His praise be in our hearts when we lie down; let His praise be on our lips when we awake.—*Mrs. Barbauld.*

MORNING PRAYER FOR A CHILD.

Heavenly Father, I thank Thee for this new day. Now may I try to please Thee to-day. Help me to be obedient to my father and mother, and very kind to every one around me. Help me to speak the truth, and in everything to do my best. May I feel thankful to Thee for everything that makes me happy, and remember that Thy love and care are over all Thy children everywhere. AMEN.

As the mother moveth about the house with her finger on her lips, and stilleth every little noise, that her infant be not disturbed; as she draweth the curtains around its bed, and shutteth out the light from its eyes; so God draweth the curtains of darkness around us; so He maketh all things to be hushed and still, that His large family may sleep in peace.—*Mrs. Barbauld.*

EVENING PRAYER FOR A CHILD.

Heavenly Father, bless me, and take care of me this night, and give me quiet sleep. Forgive all that I have done wrong this day, and help me as I grow older to try more and more to please Thee. Bless my dear father and mother [and brothers and sisters]. May we be a happy family on earth, and at last a happy family in heaven. AMEN.

NATURAL HISTORY.

HOW TO DESCRIBE A MOSS.

Have you looked for mosses this winter? And have you found the kinds described in the *Little Unity?* If you have looked carefully, you have probably found many kinds that are different from those described; and, if you desire to know what these are (I always like to have a name by which to call my friends), I will tell you what we will do. If such a moss is in fruit, and you will write out a complete description of it, according to the directions given below, and will send to me both the moss and the description, I will do my best to find its name for you. In describing it, you must notice the following points:—

The situation,—whether you found it on the ground, on rocks, or on trees, and whether it was in a damp or dry locality.

The color,—whether dark or light, a yellow-green or a blue-green.

The stem,—prostrate or erect? simple or branched?

The leaves,—their size, shape, and attitude,—that is, whether they are erect or spreading. Sometimes it is easier to see the shape of the leaves, if one scrapes them off and flattens them between two pieces of glass.

The fruit,—whether it is lateral or terminal. See the article on "Feather Mosses." If the moss is a feather moss, I shall probably not be able to name it for you, as there are a great many kinds, only a few of which look so decidedly characteristic that I could be sure of the species.

The capsule or seed-case,—its shape and attitude.

The fruit-stalk,—is there one? and how long is it?

The cap,—whether it is entire or split up on one side; smooth or hairy. In some

mosses the cap falls off very early, so that, when you find the ripe fruit, all the caps have disappeared.

The lid,—what its shape, and whether it has a beak or handle.

The circle of teeth around the mouth of the capsule,—can you see it? and is it single or double?

Had you any idea that there would be so much to say about such a small, inconspicuous thing as a moss? If you could look at it through a compound microscope, you would find still more to say about it; but all the points mentioned above can be seen with the naked eye, and a habit of noticing them will often make you see that mosses, which at first sight appear very similar, are really quite different. *Cora H. Clarke.*

All the mosses hitherto described are what is called "terminal-fruited,"—that is, the fruit or the fruit-stalk grows directly on the top of the stem. Sometimes, however, if you find old, last year's fruit, young shoots will have grown up around it, making it look as if from the side of the stem. Mosses, where the fruit-stalk really proceeds from the side of the stem, are called "lateral fruited." When these mosses have a capsule which is not quite erect, but tilted a little upon the stem, or even curved into a semicircle, and with a double fringe around the mouth of the box, they are called "feather-mosses." The botanical name is *hypnum*, which is an old Greek name for some moss.

Feather-mosses grow in all sorts of situations,—on the ground, on rocks, on trees, on decayed wood, in dry places, in wet places, and even under water. The stems are apt to trail over the ground, or rocks, or wood, making a green spreading carpet; but they may stand erect, and, indeed, these mosses vary greatly in size, color, form, and other characteristics.

C. H. C.

SOCIAL LIFE IN PERSIA.

The social life of Persia was originally the natural outgrowth of certain climatic and racial conditions. As it was twenty-five hundred years ago, such it continued to-day practically unchanged. Only when the conditions change will the social life of the country also change. It is a mistake to suppose that Mohammed or the precepts he laid down in the Koran produced any radical deviations in the social or domestic institutions of the countries which embraced his doctrines. He enunciated the great principles of monotheism, new in many parts of the East, or forgotten, and only seemed to introduce a new social system by simply placing his official seal of approbation on what already existed, adding a few details here and there, and thus making obligatory as articles of faith customs which had obtained for ages by reason of usage rather than law.

The patriarchal life of the early Persians served as the foundation for the great nation, which was finally evolved when numerous nomadic tribes were crystallized into a homogeneous, powerful, and absolute monarchy. The sovereign continued to be simply a patriarch governing, but controlling, a larger family or clan; and, in her social system, the father or head of a family is still in Persia not merely a father, but a ruler to whom all his descendants pay due reverence and allegiance. He is the patriarch until death removes him, and his eldest son takes his place.

It was not the Koran which instituted polygamy; and the kings of Persia, with their vast harems, merely practised on a scale suited to their rank, a connubial system established by their ancestors, the early patriarchs. At the outset the women were not kept in seclusion, nor are they now among those Persians who are still nomads. But the kings, in order to exhibit greater state and preserve a pure lineage, introduced the custom of carefully guarding their wives and concubines, and keeping them from the public eye. The custom extended to the nobles, and was gradually adopted by all classes except the nomads. But, of course, it is impossible for any one but the sovereign to entirely seclude his wives; hence the Persian women have liberty to go abroad; but they must be closely veiled, and no man can enter the quarter of a dwelling devoted to them except the husband and the sons. It is evident that these essential traits of Persian life are directly evolved from the early patriarchal system, while the elaborate ceremonial etiquette which is universally practised in Persia is borrowed from the extreme ceremonies which pro-

tect approach to the sovereign, and make his person and power more august and terrible in the eyes of the people. In like manner it is precisely by strictly maintaining a graded scale of etiquette that men in different social grades protect themselves in a country where all are equally the slaves of the sovereign. All these apparently absurd social rules, which so often arouse the derision of Europeans, have their basis therefore in utility. When the necessity for them ceases with changing conditions, this elaborate social system of Persia will pass away, exactly as duelling, or the too ready resort to arms for resenting affronts, will wholly disappear from the South when it is found that society is sufficiently well organized and compact to give a man other and more rational means for avoiding affront or aggression.

The social life of Persia is conditioned, also, on its domestic life. The two are distinct in that country, instead of being interrelated or forming one system, as with us. Polygamy and the seclusion of Oriental women makes it impossible for the sexes to meet in Persia on social terms, or for such a thing to exist as general society. Whatever society each sex enjoys must be exclusively with members of its own sex. Women may give entertainments or visit; men may do the same. But on all such occasions only one sex is represented. The interchange of visits among Persian ladies is attended by an etiquette similar to that practised by the men, with somewhat more attention, perhaps, to serving and urging the guest to eat fruit and confectionery. But, except among women of the highest rank, who have private baths attached to their residences, the most important social factor among Persian women is the public bath. There they assemble with their children; and, after bathing and having their long tresses dyed with henna and plaited in long braids, which are good for several days, they gather in groups, making the exquisite embroidery for which they are famous, and exchanging the gossip of the neighborhood. Thus they plan the marriages of their children, retail the news they have had from their husbands, and learn what is going on in the world, adding to the means which they possess in no less degree than their European sisters for influencing the male members of their households and swaying the affairs of the nation. They who think that the seclusion of Oriental women results in a diminution of their influence, labor under a great mistake. If anything, this seclusion sharpens their wits and quickens their talent for intrigue and the execution of deep-laid designs, and the men are like putty in their hands. Occasionally a Persian husband, in a sudden paroxysm of rage, or restive under petticoat rule, may temporarily rebel, and vigorously assert himself; but he is soon reduced to subjection again, and fair woman resumes her sway. Half the civil wars of Persia have been due to the women. —*S. G. W. Benjamin, formerly United States Minister to Persia.*

AMUSEMENT COLUMN.

[*Contributions to this column should be sent to Miss K. C. Porter, 22 Brimmer Street, Boston, Mass.*]

I.

By half of me set third of you,
And let us be annexed.
Then take the other half of me,
And pray you be not vexed.

For, if you'd see my pointed nose,
My quick and whisking ways,
My sparkling eyes and tiny toes,
You thus my whole can raise.

II.

First, I am what the wind is doing;
Beheaded once, of cows the cry;
Again, that many lose by doing;
Behead again,—the birds that fly
Use me in all their various flights.
This your attention now invites.

III.

Alphabetical Puzzle.

1. What letter clothes a boy?
2. What letter once brought gloom into the homes of all men?
3. What letter makes the truth lucid?
4. What letter extends skill by two wheels?
5. What letter changes a tree into mincemeat?

IV.

I am a word of two letters.

My first represents that which is dearer to me than house or lands.

My second is the name of an article which cheers my life and adds to my enjoyment.

My whole is the most definite and the most indefinite word in the English language, which may apply to anything in the universe, and which can yet designate but a single thing.

V.

My number, definite and known,
Is 10 times 10 told 10 times o'er.
½ of me is 1 alone,
The other exceeds all count and score.

Conundrums.

Why is A like a honeysuckle?

When is a thermometer like a vegetable?

What are the most wonderful things seen?

What is that which occurs twice in a moment, once in a minute, and not in a thousand years?

Answers to Puzzles in January Number.

I.

Initials.—Charles Dickens.

Finals.—Pickwick Papers.

1. *Cap.* 2. *Hadji.* 3. *Alec.* 4. *Risk.* 5. *Low.* 6. *Eli.* 7. *Sumac.* 8. *Dirk.* 9. *Imp.* 10. *Camera.* 11. *Keep.* 12. *Eagle.* 13. *Nectar.* 14. *Sailors.*

II.

1. hal*t*, hat.
2. *d*roll, roll.
3. pear*l*, pear.
4. bow*l*, bow.
5. *d*earth, earth.
6. *m*ask, ask.

III.

"At Christmas play and make good cheer,
For Christmas comes but once a year."

1. Land. 2. Task. 3. Rise. 4. Ache. 5. Drone. 6. Money. 7. Rose. 8. History. 9. Fortunate. 10. Chapter. 11. Animal. 12. Master. 13. Bake. 14. Mat.

O friends whose hearts still keep their prime,
Whose bright example warms and cheers,
Ye teach us how to smile at Time,
And set to music all his years.

—*Whittier.*

CHANGES OF ADDRESS.

Miss Hattie E. Page, to Mrs. Hattie E. Watts, Buena Vista, Virginia.

Mrs. S. A. Rose, from Crawford, Nebraska, to Hewitt, Nebraska.

Miss Minnie Rowland, to Mrs. W. F. Thomas, Biscoe, North Carolina.

Miss Margaret Hamil, from Remus, Georgia, to 417 W. Eighth Street, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

There was a mistake in Mrs. Lila Kay's address, printed in November number. It should have been "Tennessee Colony, Anderson County, Texas," instead of North Carolina.

Miss Lucie Harris, McKenney, Virginia, has received many nice books and magazines, and does not need more.

Allietta A. Craig, Colorado Springs, Colorado, desires to have her copy of *The Cheerful Letter* discontinued. Will the friend who is sending it take notice?

What we all want is inward rest,—rest of heart and brain: the calm, strong, self-contained, self-denying character which needs no stimulants, for it has no fits of depression; which needs no narcotics, for it has no fits of excitement; which needs no ascetic restraint, for it is strong enough to use God's gifts without abusing them. The character, in a word, which is truly temperate, not in drink and food merely, but in all desires, thoughts, and actions.—*Kingsley.*

"What she could," not what she could not do, not what she thought might be done, not what she would like to do, not what she would do if she had more time, not what somebody else thought she ought to do, but "what she could."—*W. A. Shipman.*

Keep faith with thy fairest ideal unto the perfect day. Thou canst not know how many souls stand in the ray that passes through thee, waiting, hungering, thirsting, groping, for that next step which thy lamp alone can reveal unto them.—*Trinities and Sanctities.*

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.—*John* xv. 13.

THE CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE.

OBJECTS.

1. To cheer and comfort the lonely and discouraged — not only invalids, but all who need cheer and comfort — by the interchange of letters and by gifts of books and periodicals.

2. To supply in some measure to young people in remote places the lack of schools, by gifts of school-books, letters, and, for those who desire it, correspondence classes on history, the natural sciences, and other interesting branches of study. If any desire to join such classes, they may send their names to our secretary.

3. Also to supply, to some extent, the lack of a church. One good sermon or sermon extract is printed in each number of the paper. These sermons are never doctrinal, but practical, and intended to cheer and comfort the sorrowful and aid in giving a vital religion without regard to sect or creed.

4. An important part of our mission is to mothers of young families, who feel the importance of their sacred charge and are anxious to learn all that can be known to make of their children good, upright, useful men and women,— good citizens of the country,—for which we must all work together if we would make it fulfil its mission among the nations of the world and to the races of mankind. We give books on subjects connected with the training of children, and our columns are open (in our "Mothers' Council") to all who have questions to ask or interesting suggestions to make on topics important to mothers.

TRAVELLING LIBRARIES.

The Travelling Libraries have now become an important part of Cheerful Letter work. In order that this department may be thoroughly organized and systematized, Miss Louise Brown, 79 Mt. Vernon Street, Boston, Mass., has kindly consented to take it in charge. Will those interested in these libraries, and desiring information, kindly address Miss Brown as above?

The rock of my strength and my refuge is in God. Trust in him at all times.—*Psalm* lxii. 7, 8.

IMPORTANT NOTICES.

The address of our treasurer for the winter months is Miss Louise Howe, 53 Linden Street, Brookline, Mass.

Please send requests for reading matter to the Book Club Secretary, not to the Editor.

Those who send contributions of any sort to the Cheerful Letter must have them sent in by or before the fifth of the month if they are to be inserted in the next issue.

It is contrary to the rules of the Cheerful Letter Exchange to allow any one to make use of our paper by addressing letters, asking for money, clothing, or other articles, to those whose names are printed in the paper. This prohibition includes requests to borrow money and the offering of articles for sale. The name of any person who infringes this rule will be dropped from our list; and any one who receives a request of this description is desired by our Executive Committee to return no answer, but to enclose the letter at once to our secretary, Miss Langmaid.

No man can serve two masters. . . . Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.—*Matt.* vi. 24.

DIRECTIONS.

EDITOR,—Miss L. Freeman Clarke, 91 Mt. Vernon Street, Boston, Mass.

SECRETARY OF CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE,—Miss Bertha Langmaid, 373 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass.

SECRETARY OF BOOK CLUB OF CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE,—Mrs. W. B. Nichols, 2 Kensington Park, Roxbury, Mass.

TREASURER OF CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE,—Miss Louise Howe, 53 Linden Street, Brookline, Mass., or 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.

Subscriptions and renewals should be sent to the treasurer, also all changes of address and requests for discontinuance. The subscription is fifty cents a year. If subscribers do not receive the paper regularly, they are requested to notify Miss Howe at once.

Those not able to subscribe for the paper, but desiring to receive it, may do so by writing to Miss Louise Howe, as above. Please give full name and address. Also send name of minister as reference. Some of our members take the paper in order to send it to those who are not able to subscribe for it.